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19. SOOTY FLYCATCHER *MUSCICAPA SIBIRICA* GMELIN AND ASHY MINIVET  
*PERICROCOTUS DIVARICATUS* (RAFFLES) IN BANDIPUR NATIONAL PARK, KARNATAKA,  
SOUTHERN INDIA

While on a bird survey of the Bandipur National Park (11° 20'-11° 40' N, 76° 20'-76° 32' E) in April 2002, two interesting species were observed — the second record of the Sooty Flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica* from southern India and the rare winter visitor Ashy Minivet, *Pericrocotus divaricatus*.

The Sooty Flycatcher was observed in dry deciduous forest between April 18 and 20, near the Inspection Bungalow at Chammanalla in the Mulhol range of the National Park. It was the evening of April 18, at 1715 hrs, when a brown flycatcher was observed launching sorties from a dry teak (*Tectona grandis*) tree at an unusual pace, to catch insects above a recently burnt plot of forest. It was similar to the Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*, of which four individuals were also present in the vicinity offering good comparison, but differed in the following aspects *vis-à-vis* the Asian Brown: the Sooty Flycatcher was overall a couple of shades more greyish rather than brownish, bill differed in being visibly smaller and completely black vs. longer bill with a clear pale base to the lower mandible, chest and flanks were washed dusky grey, interrupted by white patches towards the flanks vs. a light brownish wash on chest, longer primary projection with reference to the tertials, a feature clearly visible and helpful in field especially if both species are together as in this case, and a pure white belly and vent appearing in contrast with the chest. The other species of brown flycatchers in southern India, the Brown-breasted Flycatcher *Muscicapa muttui* and Rusty-tailed Flycatcher *Muscicapa ruficauda* are easily separable from the Sooty and the Asian Brown and therefore not confused under ordinary circumstances.

The Asian Brown Flycatchers were noticeably slacker than the Sooty Flycatcher, but this is probably of no consequence other than the possibility of the Sooty feeding in preparation for the migration back to its breeding grounds in the Himalayas. It was observed at the same location for the next two days.

The Sooty Flycatcher's winter quarters in India, for both races *gulgergi* and *cacabata*, are "imperfectly known (records from November to March totally lacking); presumably in the foothills below *c.* 1200 m" (Ali and Ripley 1987), "poorly known" (Grimmett *et al.* 1998). Zacharias and Gaston (1993) record it from Wynaad (11° 15'-11° 55' N, 75° 45'-76° 30' E), but the record is treated as unconfirmed by Grimmett *et al.* (1998) and Kazmierczak (2000). This record of the bird, then is the first from southern India, if accepted. The similarity with the Asian Brown Flycatcher has probably resulted in individuals of the species being overlooked, but it may also be that the bird is a vagrant and should be treated as such until the emergence of further evidence to the contrary. The Asian Browns are common breeding residents at Bandipur. A 2 km transect in Chammanalla during the same trip had nearly twenty-five pairs and eight nests.

The Ashy Minivet, a female, was seen while on transect on the Karnataka-Tamil Nadu border on April 19. The habitat was a dry deciduous-moist deciduous interface with *Tectona* and *Terminalia* as the predominant vegetation; semi-evergreen trees like *Mangifera* were present along a dry stream-bed nearby. The bird had complete ash-grey upperparts, a black tail with thin white borders, white throat and a greyish wash on the underparts. It flew in from thick forest and settled on a small *Syzigium* tree before joining a mixed hunting party of birds that included the Great Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus javensis*, Small Yellow-naped Woodpecker *Picus chlorolophus*, Scarlet Minivet *Pericrocotus flammeus*, Black-headed Oriole *Oriolus xanthornus*, Black-naped Oriole *Oriolus chinensis*, Indian Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus horsfieldii*, Quaker Tit-Babbler *Alcippe poioicephala*, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch *Sitta frontalis*, Black-lored Yellow Tit *Parus xanthogenys* and Black-naped Monarch-Flycatcher, *Hypothymis azurea*. The bird kept

to the middle storey in the canopy along with the oriole and fed moving along thin branches.

The Ashy Minivet is probably a rare winter visitor to the Subcontinent (Grimmett *et al.* 1998, Thejaswi and Shivaprakash 2004) rather than “accidental winter vagrant” (Ali and Ripley 1987). There have been records from Madras (now Chennai), in Tamil Nadu (regular in Guindy National Park) and Sriharikota in the Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh (Santharam 1988, 1990), Periyar National Park (Robertson 1992), Parambikulam Wildlife Sanctuary (Thejaswi and Shivaprakash 2004) and Trivandrum (Kumar 1995) in Kerala. This is the first record of the bird from Karnataka state and hence of interest.

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## 20. NEW SITES FOR THE GLOBALLY THREATENED YELLOW-THROATED BULBUL *PYCNONOTUS XANTHOLAEMUS* (JERDON) IN KARNATAKA, KERALA AND TAMIL NADU, SOUTHERN INDIA

The Yellow-throated Bulbul *Pycnonotus xantholaemus* is a globally threatened, “Vulnerable” species (Collar *et al.* 1994, BirdLife International 2001), locally occurring over parts of eastern and southern Karnataka, south-western Andhra Pradesh, and northern and western Tamil Nadu with stony foothills scrub as its favoured habitat (Ali and Ripley 1987, BirdLife International 2001). This rare peninsular endemic has recently been the subject of studies on status assessment and habitat preference (Subramanya *et al.* 1995). The breeding biology of the bird has been studied only recently (Venkataswamappa and Chaitra 1999) although much more needs to be known (BirdLife International 2001).

Most of the sites for the Yellow-throated Bulbul in Karnataka are located in the Bangalore Rural district (BirdLife International 2001). A limited survey conducted in 2001-2002 of selected areas with suitable habitat in Chamarajanagar, Hassan, Kodagu, Mysore and Mandya districts of southern Karnataka resulted in seven new localities for the species, including the first from the Western Ghats of Karnataka. Opportunistic bird watching has added a site each at the Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary in Kerala and Dimbum in Tamil Nadu.

The Yellow-throated Bulbul was located at Arasanakatte State Forest, Arsikere hills (Hirekal State Forest), Bandipur National Park, Bettadapura hill, Chamundi hill, Melkote Temple Wildlife Sanctuary, Nagamangala and Bettadahalli near Somwarpet, all in Karnataka.

**Arasanakatte State Forest:** The Arasanakatte State Forest (12° 11' N, 76° 28' E) is a reserve forest situated some 20 km southwest of Mysore city on the Mysore-H.D. Kote road (Manandavadi road) in Mysore district. It is some 20 sq. km of dry deciduous scrub with *Capparis divaricatus*, *Cadaba fruticosa*, *Dichrostachys cinerea*, *Lantana camara* and *Pterolobium hexapetalum* as the dominant species along with *Canthium parviflorum*, *Randia dumetorum*, *Ziziphus oenoploea* and a few trees of *Acacia nilotica*, *Acacia leucophloea*, *Ficus benghalensis* and *Atalantia* sp. apart from a grove and scattered trees of the ubiquitous *Eucalyptus*.

Six Yellow-throated Bulbuls were located on an isolated rocky hillock known as Bettadabeedu, located in the western end of the forest, on June 19, 2002. The bulbuls were seen, separately, in the foothills of this hillock in dense scrub.

**Arsikere Hills:** The Maale Kallu Tirupati (Amaragiri)